

**DRYOCOETES AUTOGRAPHUS (RATZEBURG) (COL.: SCOLYTIDAE)
IN SURREY, APPARENTLY NEW TO SOUTH-EAST ENGLAND,
WITH A TAXONOMIC NOTE**

A. A. ALLEN¹ AND J. A. OWEN²

¹ 49 Montcalm Road, Charlton, London SE7 8QG.

² 8 Kingsdown Road, Epsom, Surrey KT17 3PU. E-mail: jaowen@talk21.com

ON 3 SEPTEMBER 1999, at the edge of mixed woodland on Esher Common, Surrey, we chanced upon a fallen spruce *Picea abies* of no great size and were able to extract from the tough bark of the solid stump a few specimens of a scolytid beetle; its larvae also were present. To our surprise, the species turned out later to be *Dryocoetes autographus*. On a second visit to the spot on 8 September by JAO (accompanied by Martin Luff), further examples were found.

All published British records of *D. autographus* that we have managed to trace, including recent ones, are for the more northern and western parts of the country. The southernmost county from which it appears thus far to be reported is Gloucestershire, especially the Forest of Dean area. Northward from there, records become more and more frequent though hardly numerous until Scotland is reached, and there the beetle occurs widely. JAO, who has collected over much of that country, met with it between 1971 and 1985 in five more or less scattered localities, stretching as far to the north-west as Dunvegan on the Isle of Skye

Although the species is recorded from several coniferous host-trees, all British records except one – where the host-tree is specified – appear to be from spruce. Other hosts listed by authors, at all events pine and silver fir, are probably derived from experience on the continent where insects tend to be less restricted in their tastes and habits than in Britain. The exception just mentioned relates to the original British discovery of *D. autographus* near Scarborough in April 1869 by Lawson “in some young larch trees in a fir plantation” (Fowler, 1891: 437). Even there, it seems distinctly possible that the beetles had originally been attacking some of the “fir” trees (presumably spruce) in the plantation but, for some reason, found the young larches more to their liking and transferred their attention thereto.

While on the subject of *Dryocoetes*, we think it should be pointed out that Balachowsky's genus *Dryocoetinus*, used for two of our species in the current check-list (Pope, 1977), is taxonomically invalid, being based solely on a pronotal sculptural character of no more than specific value. Some time ago, one of us (AAA), being in touch with the scolytid specialist Dr R A. Beaver, put to him the question of its validity. He fully agreed that there was no basis for its retention. With so many needless (or at best dubious), generic names cluttering up the literature, the dropping of even one is a small positive gain.

Acknowledgements

We thank Miss Christine Tilbury and Dr Tim Winter for advising us that there are records of *D. autographus* in south-east England in the Forestry Commission records.

References

- Fowler W. W., 1891. *The Coleoptera of the British Islands* 5. Reeve & Co., London.
Pope, R.D., 1977. In Kloet & Hincks (Eds.) A check List of British Insects. Part 3: Coleoptera and Strepsiptera. *Handbk. Ident. Br. Insects.* 11(3).